The Corporation of the Township of North Kawartha

External Communication Operational Policy

Approval Date:

To be added

Effective Date:

To be added

Review Date:

To be added

Associated Documents:

Township of North Kawartha Records Retention By-law
Township of North Kawartha Branding Guidelines
Township of North Kawartha Council Code of Conduct
Township of North Kawartha Corporate Communication Plan
Township of North Kawartha Use of Corporate Resources for Election Purpose By-law

Legislation:

Municipal Act
Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA)

Purpose

To establish a policy for the use and management of Official Township Communication(s) delivered through the Township of North Kawartha's official website(s) and online platform(s), ensuring that all external communication aligns with Township values, protects the Township's corporate image, and supports effective and transparent communication with the public.

Context

The Township of North Kawartha recognizes the value of external communication as an essential tool to inform, engage, and connect with the community. As such, the Township has an overriding interest and responsibility in determining what is

communicated on its behalf, and this policy establishes the standards and responsibilities required to ensure that all Official Township Communication(s) are professional, consistent, timely, and aligned with the Township's values and branding.

This policy aligns with the 2023–2026 Township Corporate Strategic Plan goals to maintain a strong, accountable municipal government that supports effective governance and provides clear, transparent, and accessible Township communication.

Scope

This policy applies to all Township of North Kawartha employees and authorized individuals who create or contribute to Official Township Communication(s). Examples of Official Township Communications include, but are not limited to:

- The Township of North Kawartha's Official Website, www.northkawartha.ca
- The Township of North Kawartha's Tourism Website, www.discovernk.ca
- The Township of North Kawartha's Facebook, @northkawartha
- The Township of North Kawartha's Tourism Facebook, @discovernorthkawartha
- The Township of North Kawartha's Tourism Instagram, @northkawartha
- The Township of North Kawartha's Youtube, @northkawartha
- The Township of North Kawartha's Linkedin, @Township-of-north-kawartha
- E-Mail Campaigns in the form of E-Newsletters
- Physical posting within Municipal Facilities
- Website News Items, Alert Banners or Pop-Ups

Council member websites or online platforms are governed by the Council Code of Conduct and the Use of Corporate Resources for Election Purposes By-law.

This policy does not apply to the Township of North Kawartha employees or Council members personal website(s) or online platforms.

Definitions

"Authorized Individuals" refers to a person who has been granted authority to access, manage, or contribute to official Township communication(s) in accordance with this policy. Authorized Individual(s) may include the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), Department Managers, Website Administrator, Designated Communications Employee(s), or Approved Website Content Editors, as defined by their respective responsibilities within this policy.

"Designated Communication Employee(s)" refers to Clerk Department employee(s) delegated by the Township Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to support official Township communication(s) functions as outlined in applicable job descriptions.

“Official Online Platform(s)” refers to a digital, internet-based environment or system that connects multiple users to facilitate interactions, transactions, content sharing, or services created, authorized, and maintained by the Township of North Kawartha for the purpose of sharing official Township communication. This includes, but is not limited to, the Township’s official websites, approved social media accounts, email campaigns, and website news items, alert banners, or pop-ups. All Township official online platform(s) must display appropriate Township branding and be managed in accordance with this policy.

“Official Township Communication(s)” refers to any external communication created, published, or distributed by Township employees or authorized individuals on behalf of the Township for public or stakeholder audiences. This includes, but is not limited to, content delivered through the official website(s), official online platform(s), email campaigns, social media, physical postings, and third-party sites.

“Official Website(s)” refers to the official website(s) owned and maintained by the Township of North Kawartha.

“Physical Posting” refers to the placement of Township of North Kawartha communications in printed or posted form within Township-owned or operated facilities, on Township property, or within approved community spaces. This includes, but is not limited to, notices, posters, signage, and bulletin board postings intended to inform the public.

“Post / Posting” refers to the act of publishing, sharing, or updating approved Official Township Communication across Township official website(s), official online platform(s), social media, third-party site(s), or physical postings. This includes text, images, links, notices, alerts, or announcements intended for public viewing.

“Social Media” refers to online platform(s) that allow users to create, share, or interact with content. Examples include Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn, and other emerging platforms approved by the Township.

“Third-Party Site” refers to any external website or online platform not owned by the Township. The Township is not responsible for the content or privacy practices of third-party sites.

“Township Authorized Tourism Online Platforms” refers to the Official Township managed online platform(s), such as the Discover North Kawartha webpage, Facebook page, or other Online platform(s), designated for the promotion of local businesses, community events, visitor experiences, and tourism-related activities. These platforms operate in alignment with the Township’s Corporate Communications Plan and Brand Guidelines and are administered by the Designated Communication Employee(s) or Authorized Individuals.

“Website Administrator(s)” refers to a Clerk Department employee delegated by the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to support Township official website(s) functions as outlined in applicable job descriptions.

“Website Content Editor(s)” refers to employee(s) assigned by Department Managers to maintain or update approved content within their designated department web pages, on the official website(s).

Responsibilities

Chief Administrative Officer (CAO)

Ensures compliance with the External Communication Operational Policy, approves policy revisions and major content direction. Authorizes individual(s), including Website Administrator(s) to maintain the Township official website(s), and Designated Communication Employee(s) to manage official Township communication(s).

Department Manager(s)

Ensures that all external communication content from their department(s) is accurate, timely, and relevant. Submit updates and requests for external communication to the Designated Communications Employee(s), in alignment with the Township’s Corporate Communications Plan. Department managers may delegate content management tasks to an employee, such as a Website Content Editor, but retains full accountability for all departmental external communication.

Website Administrator(s)

Oversees the technical management and structural integrity of the Township’s official website(s). Responsible for maintaining website functionality, navigation, user permissions, and accessibility compliance. Creates or modifies webpage structures as required to support approved external communications and departmental needs. Provides technical guidance and training to Department Manager(s), Designated Communications Employee(s) and/or Website Content Editor(s). Coordinates website-related changes to ensure alignment with Township policies, brand standards, and accessibility requirements. Certain responsibilities may be shared with other authorized individual(s), such as the Designated Communications Employee(s).

Designated Communication Employee(s)

Executes the implementation of the Corporate Communications Plan. Coordinates internal content requests received from Department Manager(s) or Website Content Editor(s) and publishes approved content. Maintains Township brand integrity by ensuring a consistent voice across all official online platforms. Certain responsibilities may be shared with other authorized individual(s), such as the Website Administrator(s).

Website Content Editor(s)

Delegated by Department Manager(s) to update assigned department webpages on the Township's official website(s). Must obtain approval from Department Manager(s) or the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) for all external communication updates on the official website(s). Must complete training provided by the Website Administrator(s) and ensure that all assigned webpages remain accurate, relevant, accessible and current.

Records

Media posts and public comments collected or published through the Township's official online platform(s) are considered public information and must be managed in accordance with Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA) and the Township's, in effect, Records Retention By-law.

Social Media posts, comments or messages are not considered to be an official record.

Governing Rules and Regulations

The Township of North Kawartha's official website(s) are classified as the primary online presence. All other official online platform(s) complement and amplify Township external communication.

All official Township communication should align with the Township's Corporate Communications Plan and Brand guidelines.

All structural, functionality, or navigation changes to the Township official website(s) must be coordinated through the Website Administrator(s) to ensure compliance with Township policies, accessibility standards.

All official Township communication on social media must be coordinated through the Designated Communication Employee(s) to ensure consistency in messaging, tone, and appearance.

Tourism-related content intended to promote local businesses, community events, or visitor experiences may be shared through Township authorized tourism online platform(s), such as Discover North Kawartha, in alignment with the Corporate Communications Plan.

The Designated Communications Employee(s) or authorized individual(s) specifically appointed by the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), may post content to the Township's official website(s) or online platform(s).

In the event of an emergency or urgent matters, such as fire bans, significant weather events, road closures, or public safety advisories, the Designated Communication Employee(s) will post content as soon as possible following confirmation from the Chief Administrative Officer or the relevant Department Manager(s). In the absence of the Designated Communication Employee(s), the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) or another authorized individual may post approved content directly to Township official website(s), online platform(s), physical posting.

All Township communication must:

- Reflect the Township's corporate branding
- Be professional, respectful, accessible, and concise
- Content must be accurate and relevant to the Township of North Kawartha community

Prohibited content:

- Confidential, profane, discriminatory, or threatening content
- Promote commercial interest or third-party advertising without approval from the Chief Administrative Officer, except where content is shared through Township authorized tourism online platforms for the purpose of promoting local businesses, community events, or tourism-related activities
- Violate copyright, privacy, or Township by-laws or policies
- Contain spam, malware, or unauthorized data collection

The Township of North Kawartha reserves the right to block users on official online platforms who repeatedly violate content rules.

Public comments made on Township social media platform(s) do not reflect the views of the Township. The Township is not responsible for user-generated content and reserves the right to remove inappropriate posts and block repeat offenders in accordance with this policy.

The Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) holds the authority to modify or revise this policy at any time, as deemed necessary, to ensure continued effectiveness and alignment with Township objectives.

Brand Integrity and Logo Use

The Township of North Kawartha's brand, including its logo, visual identity, and corporate voice, is a critical asset and must be used consistently and appropriately in all official communications.

The Township logo shall be used on all official Township communications, both internal and external, in accordance with the Township's Brand Guidelines. The logo must not be altered, modified, or distorted in any way. This includes, but is not limited to, changes in colour outside of approved brand colours, the addition of shadows, outlines, effects, or any other visual modifications.

For written document formats, the Township logo shall be placed in the left-hand corner of the document unless otherwise approved through the Township's Brand Guidelines.

The primary Township logo may be used for all other internal and external written correspondence and communications. The Township's official seal shall be used exclusively for Council and other formally authorized municipal matters.

Maintaining brand integrity and a strong, consistent brand voice is essential to ensuring public trust, recognition, and professionalism. All communications shall align with the Township's Corporate Communications Plan and Brand Guidelines to ensure consistency in tone, appearance, and messaging across all platforms.

Use of the Township of North Kawartha logo, official seal, or other branding elements by external organizations or individuals is strictly prohibited unless prior approval is granted by the Chief Administrative Officer or Designated Communications Employee(s). Unauthorized use of Township branding may result in a request for removal or other corrective action.

Centralized Communications and Brand Consistency

To maintain a unified brand voice and ensure consistent, accurate messaging, all Official Township Communications intended for public release must be coordinated through the appropriate authorized individual(s) in alignment with the Corporate Communications Plan. While the Designated Communications Employee(s) coordinate Official Township Communications, all media inquiries must be directed to the Mayor as the official Township spokesperson, with the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) serving as the alternate spokesperson. Content that is not included in the Corporate Communications Plan, or that arises outside of planned departmental submissions, must also be submitted to the Website Administrator(s) or Designated Communications Employee(s) for review and approval prior to publication to the official website(s), online platform(s) or physical posting. This ensures that all messaging, even unplanned or ad hoc content, aligns with Township values, branding, and communication standards.

Department Manager(s) are responsible for identifying communication needs within their departments and providing accurate, relevant, and timely information to the appropriate authorized individual(s) for publication. Unauthorized Individual(s) are not

permitted to post or edit Official Township Communication directly unless specifically authorized by Department Manager(s) or Chief Administrative Officer (CAO).

Website Content Editor(s) may update their designated webpages on the official website(s), as delegated by Department Managers, ensuring content remains accurate, relevant, and timely, but must not alter webpage structure.

Accessibility

All public facing communications must be designed to be clear, inclusive, and accessible to the widest possible audience.

- Font – Preferred use of Arial, 12-point size, for all written materials.
- Language – Use plain language that is simple, effective, and to the point. Avoid complex words, acronyms, and jargon that may not be understood by the general public.
- Formatting – Avoid underlined, italic font styles, or all-uppercase lettering, as it may reduce readability.
- Document Accessibility – All documents intended for public release must be prepared as accessible PDFs and verified using an accessibility checker before publication.
- Content – Include alternative text for images, use descriptive link test for hyperlinks, and ensure colour contrast meets accessibility standards.

All communication must comply with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and any applicable Township accessibility policies.

Content Creation Standards

To maintain a professional and consistent voice across all official online platforms, the following standards must be observed by all Authorized individual(s) when creating or submitting content for Township communication:

- Content must be fact-based, accurate, and within the employee(s) member's area of expertise
- Content must not pre-empt official announcements unless formally approved
- Only publicly available and non-confidential information shall be shared
- Third-party content must be credited appropriately and used with permission where applicable
- All content must align with the Township's brand, tone, and accessibility standards

Community Event Posting Guidelines

The Township of North Kawartha supports and encourages community events that:

- Occur within the Township of North Kawartha boundaries
- Are open to the general public
- Are hosted by non-profits, organizations, service clubs, government partners, or community groups
- Promote culture, recreation, education, heritage, or public awareness

The Township reserves the right to decline the promotion of events that:

- Are commercial or for-profit events without sponsorship or sanctions from the Township
- Private, invitation-only, or exclusive events
- Fundraising events for organizations that are not registered charities or non-profits
- Events that are discriminatory, hateful, obscene, or conflict with Township policies or applicable by-laws

Content intended for Township Authorized Tourism Online Platforms(s), may include promotion of local businesses, community events, or tourism-related activities, provided it aligns with the Corporate Communications Plan and has been approved by the Designated Communications Employee(s) or Website Administrator(s).

Event submissions go through an approval process to help ensure accuracy and relevance. Please allow up to five (5) business days for your event to be reviewed and published.

Posting an event on the Township's website or social media is not a substitute for formal event approval. Event organizers must apply for any necessary permits, including a Special Event Permit, in accordance with the Township by-laws.

The North Kawartha Public Library maintains its own event calendar. Events listed on the library's calendar may be shared by the Township at the request of the North Kawartha Library's Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or their delegated employee(s) member.

The Township reserves the right to edit, decline, or remove event postings at any time, without prior notice.

Technical Support

All technical support requests related to Township official online platforms must be directed to the Website Administrator(s) or Designated Communications Employee(s).

Any direct contact with external platform providers should be approved and coordinated through the Website Administrator(s) or Designated Communications Employee(s).

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Approval of Chief Administrative Officer

The Corporation of the Township of North Kawartha

External Communication Operational Policy

Appendix A: After-Hours Emergency External Communications

Purpose

This Appendix establishes procedures to support timely and consistent external communication during after-hours emergency situations that do not activate the Municipal Emergency Response Plan. It is intended to provide operational guidance to staff while maintaining public awareness, transparency, and safety.

Emergency communications falling under the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) or Municipal Emergency Response Plan are governed by their respective plans and appendices and are not addressed in this Appendix.

Scope

This Appendix applies to after-hours emergencies or urgent situations requiring immediate public notification, including but not limited to:

- Road closures
- Significant weather events
- Fire bans
- Service disruptions
- Public safety advisories

This appendix does not apply to events managed through the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) or Municipal Emergency Response Plan.

Roles and Authority

After-hours emergency external communications are primarily completed by the Designated Communications Employee(s). In situations requiring immediate public notification, and where Designated Communications Employee(s) are unavailable, the Chief Administrative Officer, Department Managers, or another authorized individual may post approved standard messaging directly to Township official website(s) or official social media platforms.

All individuals posting emergency communications must follow this policy and this Appendix to the greatest extent possible.

Communication Principles

During after-hours emergencies, the Township prioritizes:

- Timely dissemination of accurate information
- Clear and accessible messaging for the general public
- Public safety and awareness

While maintaining Township brand integrity remains a priority, it is recognized that emergency communications may not fully reflect standard brand voice or formatting. In such situations, clarity and speed of communication take precedence.

Standard Messaging and Templates

Standard after-hour emergency external communication templates and supporting imagery have been developed for recurring situations, including:

- Road closures
- Significant weather events
- Fire bans
- Service disruptions
- Public safety advisories

These resources are available to all municipal staff at the following locations:

- Shared Drive: S:\A09 Policies\External Communication Operational Policy
- Filehold: A-09 Policies and Procedures\Operational Policies
- OneDrive: https://northkawarthaca-my.sharepoint.com/:f:/g/personal/k_johnson_northkawartha_ca/IgCZy7xUhP_ETq4zDbSS0LrmAcj2VmIwhDvc58VooONyjQs?e=CLOJsZ

Templates are intended to support consistency and efficiency and may be used by authorized individuals during after-hours emergencies.

After-hour Emergency External Communication Process

Where feasible, after-hour emergency external communications should follow the following process:

1. Confirm after-hour emergency details with the appropriate Department Manager or Chief Administrative Officer.

2. Where possible, select the appropriate standard external communication template.
3. Publish after-hours emergency external communications across all Township official online platform(s) where possible, and at a minimum through the Township official website(s) or Official Social Media Platform(s), including Facebook. Notify Designated Communications Employee(s) once available to assume ongoing communication management.

Transition Back to Normal Operations

Upon returning to normal business hours, the Designated Communications Employee(s) will be notified of any after-hours emergency external communications. All roles and responsibilities will then return to their standard assignments as outlined in the External Communications Operational Policy, with the Designated Communications Employee(s) assuming ongoing coordination and updates as applicable.